LYRICS OF JOY

By

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN

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HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1904

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Published October 1904

TO
CLINTON SCOLLARD

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FANCY

CONFESSION

When I was young I made a vow
To keep youth in my heart as long
As there were birds upon the bough
To gladden me with song:

To learn what lessons Life might give,
To do my duty as I saw,
To love my friends, to laugh and live
Not holding Death in awe.

So all my lyrics sing of joy,
And shall until my lips are mute;
In old age happy as the boy
To whom God gave the lute.

WITCHERY

Out of the purple drifts,
  From the shadow sea of night,
On tides of musk a moth uplifts
  Its weary wings of white.

Is it a dream or ghost
  Of a dream that comes to me,
Here in the twilight on the coast,
  Blue cinctured by the sea?

Fashioned of foam and froth —
  And the dream is ended soon,
And, lo, whence came the moon-white moth
  Comes now the moth-white moon!

DIES ULTIMA

White in her woven shroud,
Silent she lies,
Deaf to the trumpets loud
Blown through the skies;
Never a sound can mar
Her slumber long:
She is a faded star, —
A finished song!

Over her hangs the sun,
A golden glow;
Round her the planets run,
She does not know;
For neither gloom nor gleam
Can reach her sight:
She is a broken dream, —
A dead delight!

No voice can waken her
Again to sing;
She nevermore will stir
To feel the spring;
Through the dim ether hurled
Till Time shall tire,
She is a wasted world, —
A frozen fire!

A TEAR BOTTLE

Glass, wherein a Greek girl's tears
Once were gathered as they fell,
After these two thousand years
Is there still no tale to tell?

Buried with her, in her mound
She is dust long since, but you
Only yesterday were found
Iridescent as the dew, —

Fashioned faultlessly, a form
Graceful as was hers whose cheek
Once against you made you warm
While you heard her sorrow speak.

At your lips I listen long
For some whispered word of her,
For some ghostly strain of song
In your haunted heart to stir:

But your crystal lips are dumb,
  Hushed the music in your heart:
Ah, if she could only come
  Back again and bid it start!

Long is Art, but Life how brief!
  And the end seems so unjust:—
This companion of her grief
  Here to-day, while she is dust!

THE DAY'S SHROUD

From sunrise to the set of sun
The Winds went to and fro,
Singing the while they deftly spun
A garment white like snow.

And in the dusk, unto the west
They bore the robe of cloud,
And for the grave the dead Day dressed
Within this snowy shroud.

Then, slowly vanishing from sight,
I heard them softly sing,
And saw above the grave at night
The stars all blossoming.

A SEA GHOST

All night I heard along the coast
  The sea her grief outpour;
And with the dawn arose a ghost
  To haunt the furrowed shore.

And when from out the gray mist rolled
  The sun above the town,
A shipwrecked sailor came and told
  Of how the ship went down.

Then did I sudden understand
  The sobbing of the sea,
And of that white ghost on the sand
  I knew the mystery.

A BIRD'S ELEGY

He was the first to welcome Spring;
Adventurous, he came
To wake the dreaming buds and sing
The crocus into flame.

He loved the morning and the dew;
He loved the sun and rain;
He fashioned lyrics as he flew
With love for their refrain.

Poet of vines and blossoms, he;
Beloved of them all;
The timid leaves upon the tree
Grew bold at his glad call.

He sang the rapture of the hills,
And from the starry height
He brought the melody that fills
The meadows with delight.

And now, behold him dead, alas!
Where he made joy so long:
A bit of blue amid the grass,—
A tiny, broken song.

SECRET

Softly the little wind goes by,
A whisper, — nothing more;
Some message from the azure sky
Brought down to earth's green door.

Fragrant and fresh the wonder-word,
But what it means, who knows?
Only the butterfly, the bird,
The leaf, the grass and rose.

Theirs the divine felicity,
The gift of wisdom rare,
The melody, the mystery,
The secret of the air.

THE POET

Voice of the wind, of singing brook and bird,
Dawn's message white and midnight's word,
These secrets all belong
Unto his song.

For Nature to the poet's heart alone
Makes her mysterious meanings known:
He is her voice and her
Interpreter!

THE CHARM

Slight is the thing it needs to wake
The embers that have slumbered long
Within the poet's heart, and make
Them burn again with song.

A rose, a star, a voice, a glance,
Echo or glimpse, — it is the same:
Some mystery of time or chance
That finds the hidden flame.

Embers of song and song's desire,
Hushed in the singer's heart they lie,
And softly kindle into fire
If but a dream go by.

And none may say, since none can know,
Whence comes the vivifying spark
That sends a transitory glow
Of song across the dark.

It is a secret summons, such
As comes unto the spray when spring
Wakens the blossoms with a touch,
That bids the poet, *Sing!*

HIS DESIRE

Of all the threads of rhyme
  Which I have spun,
I shall be glad if Time
  Save only one.

And I would have each word
  To joy belong —
A lyric like a bird
  Whose soul is song.

There is enough of grief
  To mar the years;
Be mine a sunny leaf,
  Untouched by tears,

To bring unto the heart
  Delight, and make
All sorrows to depart,
  And joy to wake.

No sermon mine to preach,
  Save happiness;
No lesson mine to teach,
  Save joy to bless.

Joy, 't is the one best thing
  Below, above:
The lute's divinest string,
  Whose note is love.

THE MUSE

The songs I make, they are not mine,
They all belong to her
Whose words in some strange way combine
To set my heart astir.

If but her eyes look down on me
The while I pause to write,
By some swift touch of sorcery
The sombre lines grow bright.

Her voice upon me lays a spell
Of music soft and sweet;
Imperfectly, what she may tell,
My lyrics but repeat.

I am as one who hears the thrush
In some leaf covert dim,
And in the intermittent hush
Ponders the dew-fresh hymn:

Or one who in a shadowed place
Watches the stars agleam
And knows their beauty on his face
Illumining his dream:

Or one who catches from the rose
A fragrant message sent
From crimson lips and straightway knows
All of the Orient.

Like these am I, and all my rhymes
Are but the records clear
That write themselves at magic times
When she, the Muse, is near.

For could I make my own her song,
Unto the world I'd give
A lyric which should live as long
As song itself shall live!

THE INTERPRETER

Not his alone the gift divine
Who understands how, line by line,
To re-create the dream with all
Its wonder-world ethereal :
Something of that same gift has he
Who, reading, through the lines can see
The dream itself, — the secret thing
That stirred the poet's heart to sing.

HARRO

This is brave Harro's story,
Harro who watched the sea:
To his renown I set it down
As it was told to me.

Back from the reef-caught vessel
Came Harro's comrades four,
And with them ten half-perished men
Safe landed on the shore.

"And are these all?" asked Harro.
Answered the sailors brave:
"Nay. One lashed high we left to die,
And find an ocean grave."

Cried Harro: "Who goes with me
To rescue him, the last,
Alive or dead? Shall it be said
We left one on the mast?"

Spoke up his gray-haired mother :
"Oh, Harro boy, my son,
Go not, I pray! 'T is death they say,
And there is only one!

"Father and brother Uwe
The cruel sea hath slain.
My last art thou. Good Harro, now
Let me not plead in vain!"

Answered brave Harro: "Mother,
Who knows, perchance for him
Under the skies a mother's eyes
To-day with tears grow dim.

"Farewell! God watches over
The fields of flying foam,
And He shall keep us on the deep,
And safely bring us home."

Wild was the storm-swept ocean,
And like a fragile leaf
The lifeboat tossed long ere it crossed
Unto the distant reef.

Wild was the sea, and madly
Ever the tempest blew,
While down the track came Harro back
With one beside the crew.

Hard to the oars his comrades
Bent in the shrieking gale;
And Harro cried, when land he spied,
"Thank God, we shall not fail!"

And when he saw his mother
Pacing the shore in tears,
Loud over all the storm his call
Brought gladness to her ears.

Over and over he shouted,
And high his cap he waved:
"God gives thee joy! God sends thy boy!
'T is Uwe we have saved!"

Such is brave Harro's story,
Harro who watched the sea:
To his renown I set it down
As it was told to me.

WITH HERRICK

In the green woods is the brook,
Like a lyric in his book,
Singing as it slips along
Tender strains of sylvan song.
Carol of the thrush's throat
Echoes in its liquid note;
Murmur of the woodland bee
Haunts its drowsy melody;
And its music, soft and low,
Mimics all the gales that go
Whispering in boughs of green
Spread above it like a screen.
O'er its brink the lily, white
As the risen moon at night,
Leans in rapture, listening
To the song it has to sing.
Like a maiden who for love
From her lattice leans above,
Drinking in the song that slips
Through the shadows from the lips
Of her lover in the gloom,
So above the brook this bloom

Leans to hear the message sweet
That her lover may repeat.
Loitering beside the stream,
Is it strange that I should dream —
Dream of Herrick, and of Her
For whose eyes his lyrics were?
Julia, — she this lily is,
And the brook's songs all are his!

CANOE SONG

GRACEFULEST of buoyant things,
Wanting but the snowy wings
Of your kin, the swan, to be
Queen of both the sky and sea;
Softly down the tranquil stream,
As through slumber glides a dream,
With the current let us go
Where the slim reeds, row on row,
Make sweet music all day long,
And the air is full of song.

Silent as the red man, who
Out of birch-bark fashioned you,
Steal along and come upon
Hosts of water-lilies wan
Suddenly, and bring surprise
To their wonder-waking eyes;
Then be off again once more,
Shadow-like, and haunt the shore,
Gathering from bending grass
Water secrets as you pass.

On and on and on we drift
Till the stars begin to sift
Through the twilight and, on high,
At her window in the sky
Comes the Night's pale bride to hark
For his message through the dark;
Till at last the silver sand
Reaches down and bids us land,
Then till dawn, farewell to you —
Sister of the swan — Canoe!

A GARLAND

Let me a garland twine
For poets nine,
Whose verse
I love best to rehearse.

For each a laurel leaf,
One stanza brief,
I make
For memory's sweet sake.

First, then, Theocritus,
Whose song for us
Still yields
The fragrance of the fields.

Next, Horace, singing yet
Of love, regret,
And flowers:
This Roman rose is ours.

Omar-Fitzgerald next,
Within whose text
There lies
A charm to win the wise.

Then Shakespeare, by whose light
All poets write:
The star
Whose satellites they are!

Herrick then let me name,
Whose lyrics came
Like birds
To sing his happy words.

Then Keats, whose jewel rhyme
Shines for all time,
To tell
Of him the gods loved well.

Longfellow next I choose:
For him the muse
Held up
Song's over-brimming cup.

Next TENNYSON, whose song,
Still clear and strong,
Soars high,
Nearing each day the sky.

Then ALDRICH — like a thrush
In the dawn's flush,
Who sings
With dew upon his wings.

These are the nine, above
Whose leaves I love
To lean,
My happiness to glean.

Theirs are the books that hold
Joy's clearest gold
For me,
Wrought into melody;

Theirs are the words to start
Within my heart
The fire
Of song and song's desire!

A PRAYER

It is my joy in life to find
At every turning of the road,
The strong arm of a comrade kind
To help me onward with my load.

And since I have no gold to give,
And love alone must make amends,
My only prayer is, while I live, —
God make me worthy of my friends!

NATURE

THE YEAR'S DAY

After the winter's night
From the world is withdrawn,
Out of the darkness gleams the light, —
Spring — and the Year's fresh dawn.

Blossom and leaf and bud,
And the birds all in tune;
Then in a fragrant, golden flood, —
Summer — the Year's glad noon.

Crimson the roses blow,
And the grove's breath is musk:
Then to the Year the sunset glow, —
Autumn — and hints of dusk.

Glimmer the stars of frost,
And the wind at the door
Mournfully sings of something lost: —
Winter — and night once more.

ARBUTUS

Along the woods' brown edge
The wind goes wandering
To find the first pink pledge —
The hint of Spring.

The withered leaves around,
She scatters every one,
And gives to wintry ground
A glimpse of sun.

And to the woodland dumb
And desolate so long
She calls the birds to come
With happy song.

Then the arbutus! This
The pledge, the hint she sought, —
The blush, the breath, the kiss, —
Spring's very thought!

VIOLET

In this white world of wonder
All wrapt in silence deep,
Shut in her palace under
The snow she lies asleep;
And she shall only waken
When lyrics sweet and clear
Out of the trees are shaken,
And April 's here.

Glimpses of grass and gleams of
The golden sunlight bring
Visions of joy and dreams of
The miracle of Spring:
She sees the shining faces
Of buds and leaves appear,
Lighting the shadowed spaces
With *April 's here!*

Then, O the nameless rapture
  Of that warm touch at last,
When April comes to capture
  And hold her fragrance fast!
The dream of winter broken,
  Behold her, blue and dear,
Shy Violet, sure token
  That April 's here!

APRIL

After the silence long
On valley and hill,
Listen, — again the song
Of the silver rill!

Vanishes from the plains
The prison of snow;
Broken the crystal chains,
And the captives go;

Over the Winter's tomb
The bird in its mirth
Carols of bud and bloom
To the barren earth;

Tremble the vines and trees
With ecstasy then,
Hearing the lisping breeze
Hint of Spring again.

Mystery fills the air,
And melody sweet
Follows the pathways where
Glimmer Spring's white feet.

Over the meadow's floor
She hastens, and — see!
April is at the door
With her golden key!

BACCHUS

Listen to the tawny thief
Hid behind the waxen leaf,
Growling at his fairy host,
Bidding her with angry boast
Fill his cup with wine distilled
From the dew the dawn has spilled:
Stored away in golden casks
Is the precious draught he asks.

Who, — who makes this mimic din
In this mimic meadow inn,
Sings in such a drowsy note,
Wears a golden-belted coat,
Loiters in the dainty room
Of this tavern of perfume,
Dares to linger at the cup
Till the yellow sun is up?

It is Bacchus come again
To the busy haunts of men;
Garlanded and gayly dressed,
Bands of gold about his breast;
Straying from his paradise
Having pinions, angel-wise, —
'T is the honey-bee, who goes
Reveling within a rose!

MAY MORNING

WHAT magic flutes are these that make
  Sweet melody at dawn,
And stir the dewy leaves to shake
  Their silver on the lawn?

What miracle of music wrought
  In shadowed groves is this?
All ecstasy of sound upcaught, —
  Song's apotheosis!

The dreaming lilies lift their heads
  To listen and grow wise;
The fragrant roses from their beds
  In sudden beauty rise:

Enraptured, on the eastern hill,
  A moment, halts the sun;
Day breaks; and all again is still:
  The thrushes' song is done!

HONEYSUCKLES

Within a belfry built of bloom,
Above the garden wall they swing;
A chime of bells for winds to ring,
Of mingled music and perfume.

What scented syllables of song
Throughout the day their tongues repeat!
They tempt with promise, honey-sweet,
The listener to linger long.

A bit of sunset cloud astray,
The dappled butterfly floats near,
Lured by the fragrant music clear,
Trembles with joy, then fades away.

And thither oft, from time to time,
The humming-bird and golden bee,
List, and go mad with melody, —
The honey-music of the chime.

And thither when the silver gleam
Of moon and stars is over all,
One white moth hovers near the wall, —
A ghost to haunt the garden's dream!

WINTER DREAMS

Deep lies the snow on wood and field;
Gray stretches overhead the sky;
The streams, their lips of laughter sealed,
In silence wander slowly by.

Earth slumbers, and her dreams, — who knows
But they may sometimes be like ours?
Lyrics of spring in winter's prose
That sing of buds and leaves and flowers;

Dreams of that day when from the south
Comes April, as at first she came,
To hold the bare twig to her mouth
And blow it into fragrant flame.

WHITE MAGIC

When Winter hushes for a time
The music of the sylvan brook,
And shuts its witchery of rhyme
In her white book,
The world is not yet dumb;
For in the snow-hung vines and trees
With their cold blossoms, icy clear,
Invisible the winds like bees
Swarm, and I hear
Their weird and wizard hum.

Such is the magic wand she wields
That she can shape my fancy so
My dreams are all of fragrant fields
The wild bees know
In summer's golden noon;
And through the dull December hours
Mine is the month for which I long, —
The barren branch grows bright with flowers
Where the bees throng, —
White magic, — winter June!

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

Worn is the winter rug of white,
And in the snow-bare spots once more
Glimpses of faint green grass in sight, —
Spring's footprints on the floor.

Upon the sombre forest gates
A crimson flush the mornings catch,
The token of the Spring who waits
With finger on the latch.

Blow, bugles of the south, and win
The warders from their dreams too long,
And bid them let the new guest in
With her glad hosts of song.

She shall make bright the dismal ways
With broideries of bud and bloom,
With music fill the nights and days
And end the garden's gloom.

Her face is lovely with the sun ;
  Her voice — ah, listen to it now !
The silence of the year is done :
  The bird is on the bough !

Spring here, — by what magician's touch ?
  'T was winter scarce an hour ago.
And yet I should have guessed as much, —
  Those footprints in the snow !

NANTUCKET

Dear old Nantucket's isle of sand,
An ancient exile from the Land, —
Free from the devastating hand
Of pomp and pillage,
I find it year by year with all
Its white-winged fleet of cat-boats small
Guarding what Fancy loves to call
The violet village.

The yellow cliffs, the houses white,
The wind-mill with its wheel in sight,
The church spire and the beacons bright,
All bunched together;
How picturesque they are! How fair!
And, O how fragrant is the air,
With pink wild-roses everywhere
And purple heather!

Half foreign seems the little town, —
The narrow streets, the tumble-down
And rotting wharves whose past renown
Is linked with whalers, —
The roofs with Look-outs whence they saw
In bygone days the big ships draw
Homeward with oil, and watched with awe
The sea-worn sailors :

Half foreign, but the better half
Is like the flag that from the staff
Flings out its welcome, starry laugh, —
Native completely ;
The shops, the schools, the zigzag lines
Of shingled dwellings hung with vines,
And gardens wrought in quaint designs
And smelling sweetly.

Here one may wander forth and meet
Skippers of eighty years whose feet
Find youth yet in the paven street ;
And if one hunger
For yarns of wrecks and water lore,
Pass the tobacco round once more,
And hear what happened long before,
When he was younger.

Enchanting tales of wind and wave,
Witty, pathetic, gay and grave, —
One listens in the merman's cave
Enraptured, breathless,
While from the gray, bewhiskered lips
Come stories of the sea and ships ;
The careful skipper never skips
The legends deathless.

Then out again, and let us go
Where fresh and cool the breezes blow
Over the dunes of Pocomo,
Where bird and berry
Conspire to lure us on until,
Over the gently sloping hill,
We see Wauwinet, white and still
And peaceful very.

Here is the ending of the quest ;
Here, on this Island of the Blest,
Is found at last the Port of Rest, —
Remote, romantic :
A land-flower broken from the stem,
And few indeed there be of them
Fitted so perfectly to gem
The blue Atlantic.

Dreamy, delicious, drowsy, dull, —
A poppy-island beautiful;
And there are poppies here to cull
Until the plunder
Provokes the soul to sleep and dream
Amid the glamour and the gleam,
And makes the world about us seem
A world of wonder!

DAWN AND DUSK

Slender strips of crimson sky
Near the dim horizon lie,
Shot across with golden bars
Reaching to the fading stars;
Soft the balmy west wind blows
Wide the portals of the rose;
Smell of dewy pine and fir,
Lisping leaves and vines astir;
On the borders of the dark
Gayly sings the meadow-lark,
Bidding all the birds assemble, —
Hark, the heavens seem to tremble!
Suddenly the sunny gleams
Break the poppy-fettered dreams, —
  Dreams of Pan, with two feet cloven,
Piping to the nymph and faun
  Who with wreaths of ivy woven
Nimbly dance to greet the dawn.

Shifting shadows indistinct;
Leaves and branches, crossed and linked,
Cling like children and embrace,
Frightened at the moon's pale face:
In the gloomy wood begins
Noise of insect violins;
Swarms of fireflies flash their lamps
In their atmospheric camps,
And the sad-voiced whippoorwill
Echoes back from hill to hill,
Liquid clear above the crickets
Chirping in the thorny thickets.
Weary eyelids, eyes that weep,
Wait the magic touch of sleep;
  While the dew in silence falling
Fills the air with scent of musk,
  And this lonely night-bird calling
Drops a note down through the dusk.

LOVE

TO JULIET

(*Cum regnat rosa*)

HEEDLESS how it may fare with Time,
I send you here a rose of rhyme:
Its fragrance, love; its color, one
Caught from Hope's ever-constant sun;
Upon each leaf a lyric writ —
Your eyes alone may witness it;
And in its heart for you to see
Another heart — the heart of me.

All roses are as fitly worn
By you as by your sister Morn,
Since you, like Morn, fail not to give
New beauty to them while they live.
If this against your bosom rest
One brief, sweet hour its life were blest;
Then, should you chance to cast it by,
It would not find it hard to die.

So take this bloom of love and song,
And, be its life or brief or long,
Know that for you the petals part,
Disclosing all its lyric heart;
For you its fragrant breaths are drawn;
For you its color — love's glad dawn;
And for you, too, the heart that goes
Song-prisoned in this rhyme of rose!

ROSE LORE

Now since it knows
  My heart so well,
Would that this rose
  Might speak and tell!

You could not scorn
  Its winsome grace,
The blush of morn
  Upon its face.

Unto your own
  You needs must press
The sweet mouth prone
  To tenderness;

Then, lip to lip,
  With rapture stirred,
You might let slip
  The secret word,

With fragrant kiss
  Interpreting
The dream of bliss
  The rose would bring.

Then to your breast
  Take it to be
Your own heart's best
  Love-augury, —
A welcome guest, —
  To gladden me.

ON SOME BUTTERCUPS

A LITTLE way below her chin,
Caught in her bosom's snowy hem,
Some buttercups are fastened in, —
Ah, how I envy them!

They do not miss their meadow place,
Nor are they conscious that their skies
Are not the heavens but her face,
Her hair and tender eyes.

There, in the downy meshes pinned,
Such sweet illusions haunt their rest,
They think her breath the gentle wind
And tremble on her breast;

As if, close to her heart, they heard
A captive secret slip its cell,
And with desire were sudden stirred
To find a voice and tell.

THE BOWER OF CUPID

Whoso enters at this portal
Shall find Love the one immortal.
Green the grove that hides the grotto
Over which is hung this motto;
Broidered paths of bloom and berry
Lead unto the monarch merry;
Birds above on leafy branches
Loosen lyric avalanches;
Bees go singing in the sunny,
Blossom-builded haunts of honey;
Flutes of brooks and lutes of grasses
Waken with each wind that passes;
All is fragrance, song and joy,
Made for one immortal boy!

Many seek this grotto hidden;
Welcome all, and none forbidden.
Soft the air and clear as amber;
Round the gate red roses clamber;
Day long, mirth and music fill it;
Night sends moon and star to thrill it.
Voices, visions, dreams of rapture,
There await, the heart to capture;

Full it is of faultless faces —
All the Muses and the Graces;
Poem, picture, flower and fancy,
Every form of necromancy;
Naught to worry or annoy,
Save the one immortal boy!

In this grotto lies the golden
Guest-book, full of legends olden,
Writ by lovers on its pages
Since the daybreak of the ages;
Paris, Helen, Petrarch, Laura,
Meleager, Heliodora,
All the glorious *Amante*
Sung of old by Tuscan Dante,
Names that shine in song and story
Crowd this volume with their glory, —
Tokens left by all the lovers
In the world, between the covers;
Yet the record cannot cloy
Love, the one immortal boy.

Eve in Eden, fresh and pearly,
Found on Earth this grotto early;
So, it came forever after
To be haunted by her laughter.

What a countless throng have tasted
Love therein ere life was wasted!
Blind they call the boy, in kindness,
Yet is theirs the only blindness.
He is sure of ear and vision,
Hearts he matches with precision;
That is Cupid's only duty
In this bower of bliss and beauty —
That the end of all employ
Is for one immortal boy!

MOONLIGHT AND MUSIC

Dear Heart, do you remember
That summer by the sea,
One blue night in September
When you were here with me,
How like a pearl uplifted
The full moon rose and drifted,
And how the shadows shifted
Until the stars were free?

Along the beach the breakers
Brought in their lavish store,
Gathered from ocean acres,
And strewed the curving shore;
Grasses that gleamed and glistened,
Flowers that the sea had christened,
Shells at whose lips you listened
To learn their wonder-lore.

Softly the breeze blew over
From groves and gardens fair,
Spilling a scent of clover
Into the balmy air;

The breath of pines around us,
Fragrant it came and found us
Just as the moonlight crowned us
And Love at last came there.

What music hailed our rapture!
What singers on the sand
Were they whose hearts could capture
Our joy and understand?
O Wind and Wave, they guessed it,
They sang it and confessed it, —
Their love and ours, — and blessed it
There on the moonlit strand!

Dear Heart, still sweet the story,
For all the years gone by:
Still floods the moon with glory
The land, the sea, the sky:
And still the night-moth hovers
Around us and discovers
The same devoted lovers, —
Wind, Wave, and You and I.

IN ABSENCE

It matters not how far I fare,
Or in what land I bide,
Your voice sings ever on the air,
Your face shines at my side.

For me each crimson flower that slips
Its velvet sheath of green
Yields the remembrance of your lips
With all their sweets between.

Your hair is in the dusk that lies
Around me when I rest;
My only stars are your dear eyes,
Love's own and loveliest.

Happy am I, though far apart
From all that makes life dear:
Love dwells contented in my heart,
Exiled yet always near.

Then take my message, Sweet, and know
How far your love has flown
To cheer and bless your lover, so
Lonely, but not alone:

I send it from the drowsy South,
A dream of my delight,
A message to your rosebud mouth —
A kiss, and a good-night!

FOR MUSIC

LOVE'S SPRINGTIDE

My heart was winter-bound until
I heard you sing:
O voice of Love, hush not, but fill
My life with Spring!

My hopes were homeless things before
I saw your eyes:
O smile of Love, close not the door
To paradise!

My dreams were bitter once, and then
I found them bliss:
O lips of Love, give me again
Your rose to kiss!

Springtide of love! The secret sweet
Is ours alone:
O heart of Love, at last you beat
Against my own!

TO HER

My songs are all for her
  Whose love I fain would win:
Each to her heart, a wanderer,
  Goes singing: *Let me in!*

Her eyes my beacons be,
  Her lips my rosy guides,
And in her heart a melody
  For every word abides.

Be brave, be brave, my song,
  Nor falter in the quest:
Love in her heart has waited long
  To greet the singing guest.

And be it yours to know
  The latch lift on the door;
Once in her heart — Go, lyric, go!
  Be hers for evermore!

MY APRIL

Sweetheart, comes laughing April now
To right the Winter's wrong;
And back to the forsaken bough
The bluebird comes with song:
And, rivals of the stars above,
Stars in the grass you see;
So, like your namesake, April, Love —
My April, come to me!

She brings the blossom to the vine,
A token fresh and new;
She fills the crocus cup with wine,
A pledge that she is true;
She sends the sunshine after rain,
A golden augury:
Sweetheart, and must I plead in vain?
My April, come to me!

Oh, Winter lies upon my heart
A dreariness and woe :
It needs but your dear smile to start
The buds of hope to blow ;
It needs but your sweet lips to bring
The message that shall be
Like April's own, all love and Spring :
My April, come to me !

A MAY MADRIGAL

Sweetheart, the buds are on the tree,
The birds are back once more,
And with their songs they call to me
To open wide my door:
So wide shall stand the door to-day
Because my heart is true
To bud and bird, to mirth and May,
And, most of all, to You!

Sweetheart, the leaves begin to show,
The grass is green again,
And on the breeze sweet odors blow
From wild flowers in the glen:
The world is glad with voice and wing,
And all the skies are blue;
The scent, the song, the soul of Spring,
I find them all in You!

Sweetheart, the snows have gone, and now
It is the mating time.
Hark to the lover on the bough,
What melody sublime!
What ecstasy of passion, pride,
And love and rapture, too!
So door and heart stand open wide
To welcome May and You!

NOCTURNE

Above the sea in splendor
The new moon hangs alone,
A silver crescent slender
Set in a sapphire zone;
Around me breathe the tender,
Sweet zephyrs of the south:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Her kisses and her mouth.

The loose sails idly swinging,
The ship lights' glow and gleam,
The bell-buoys' muffled ringing,
Drive all my thoughts to dream, —
To dream of her voice singing
The songs I love the best:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Where she has made her nest!

O Love, where art thou biding
While hangs this moon on high?
Star in the twilight hiding,
Come forth and light the sky
Above the ship slow gliding
Over the southern sea:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Love's eyes that shine for me!

MEMORIES

As Love and I went walking
  Along the sea's gray shore,
We heard the green waves talking,
  And love was all their lore.

The purple shadows shifted,
  And through the twilight long
From singing stars there drifted
  Our sweet betrothal song.

But once, in days long after,
  We walked there, Love and I;
The waves had lost their laughter,
  The stars were hushed on high

And each remembered only
  A little voice — oh, years,
How long they are, and lonely!
  Oh, heart, how full of tears!

A SONG'S ECHO

My Love is like a Winter rose
  That sweetly blooms alone,
That has of rivals none, and knows
  A beauty all her own.

My Love is like a tender tune
  That wakens tender words,
And fills December full of June,
  And brings again the birds.

Her smile, my sun; her voice, my song;
  Her face, my flower of bliss;
Oh, who could find the Winter long
  With such a Love as this!

WITH ROSES

HERE are roses red,
For their fragrance love them:
When you bend your head
Tenderly above them,
To your own lips, sweet,
Lift them up and hold them
While their lips repeat
What my heart has told them.

Grant them of your grace,
With your beauty bless them,
Fold them to your face,
Kiss them, and caress them.
Brief their day, and so
Only gladness give them,
Yours the joy to know
Love that shall outlive them.

TWO SONGS

I

Her greeting is a dulcet bell —
  Love's daybreak and delight ;
Her smile is noon, and her farewell
  Leads in the stars at night.
She is the sunrise and the gleam
  Of dew upon the rose,
The vision that evokes the dream,
  The song in slumber's prose.

II

Roses are the rhymes I wreathe —
  Take them, every one ;
Love — the fragrance that you breathe,
  And your smile their sun.
When the petals fall apart,
  Then in melody,
You shall read a rose's heart,
  And the heart of me.

SONNETS

SAINT ROSE

Dear Rose, what volumes it would need to hold
The songs that poets have been fain to sing
In praise of you, — the ruby in June's ring,
Jewel of fragrance set in summer's gold!
What tender words of worship, since of old
In Eden Love first found you blossoming,
Have blest your beauty, hoping so to bring
A touch of warmth unto a bosom cold!

Poets and Lovers there shall ever be
So long as there are gardens where the vine
Builds a green temple of felicity
Within whose leaves is found your fragrant shrine.
O sweet Saint Rose! Dear flower of melody, —
A lover's token, take this song of mine.

SURF MUSIC

All day I hear along the sandy shore
The melancholy music of the Sea;
The green-robed choir of Ocean sing to me,
Chanting the legends of their ancient lore.
I hear the tales of mariners of yore,
Of ships gone down, of tempests blowing free;
I hear the mast, remembering the tree,
Grieve for the grove and all its leaves once more.

But when night comes and in the deep blue sky
Gather the stars above the fields of foam,
The music changes, and in fancy I
Again the old familiar forests roam
And hear the mast's companions as they cry:
Blow, Wind, and bring our captive brother home!

TO A MOCKING BIRD

Thou feathered minstrel perched in yonder tree,
Thou bird-magician in a blue-gray coat,
Trickster of tune, thou canst repeat by rote
Thy rivals' songs and win their loves to thee!
Song-sorcerer, who canst with melody
Lure us to listen; thou whose slender throat
Is full of magic, bubbling note by note;
Mimic of music, sing thou on to me!

Chatter of blackbird, warble of the wren,
Joy of the jay, and passion of the thrush,
And every trill that ever bird has known, —
I heard him jesting for a while; and then,
Softly upon the morning in a gush
Of lyric love I heard him call his own.

MUSIC

In vain the quest: no mortal eyes may know
The secret haunt wherein by day and night
She shapes her dreams of audible delight
And sends them forth to wander to and fro:
Spirits of Sound, invisible they go
To fill the world with wonder in their flight;
Celestial voices, from whose starry height
Strange hints of song steal down to earth below.

Listen and hear the rhythmic echoes fall, —
The winds and waves and leaves and bees and birds, —
The blended harmony of reeds and strings, —
Chorus and orchestra, — the voice and all
The miracle of melody and words, —
Music herself it is who dreams and sings!

THE SHOWER

Hour after hour relentlessly the sun
  Shriveled the leaves and parched the meadow grass:
  The sky was yellow and like molten brass
The heat poured down until the day was done.
Red the round moon arose, and one by one
  Blossomed the stars and in the river's glass
  Beheld their beauty, but the breeze, alas!
Refused to break the web the spider spun.

But with the dawn a little cloud drew near,
  Leading a host forth on the azure plain.
A distant rumble, then a forest cheer,
  And then a gust that whirled the weather-vane;
And then, at last, — O melody most dear!
  The soft alliteration of the rain.

TO A BUTTERFLY IN WALL STREET

Winged wanderer from clover meadows sweet,
Where all day long beneath a smiling sky
You drained the wild-flowers' cups of honey dry
And heard the drowsy winds their love repeat,
What idle zephyr, whispering deceit,
Captured your heart and tempted you to fly
Unto this noisy town and vainly pry
Into the secrets of this busy street?

To me your unexpected presence brings
A thought of fragrant pastures, buds and flowers,
And sleepy brooks, and cattle in the fold;
And, watching as you soar on trembling wings,
I think for those who toil through weary hours
You are a type of their uncertain gold!

THE WINTER POOL

Deep in the woods, amid the giant trees
It lies alone within an open space,
Beloved in summer by the sylvan race
Of God's best poets — birds and golden bees;
Diana's mirror, full of memories
Of all the nameless wonder of her face
And of the myriad jewel-stars that grace
Orion's glory and the Pleiades.

Behold it now, all ghostly white and still,
Shut in the shadow of the ice and snow,
A solitary, sad, forsaken thing;
Bereft of beauty, marred and dark until
Diana comes again and looks to know
Her luring smile — the loveliness of Spring!

BETRAYAL

THERE came a day in winter when the sun
Reached down and swept the world all clean of snow;
When captive streams long hushed in icy woe
Escaped with song again to dance and run:
Between the purple hills the vales were spun
With silver mist, and, dreaming in the glow,
The trees and vines were tremulous as though
They felt the buds unfolding one by one.

Just for a day this glamour touched the dearth
And dreariness of life, — one vision brief
Of joy that lit the sorrow of the earth, —
Then passed, and with it hope went and belief:
So Love once came and with a voice of mirth
Betrayed my heart and left it dumb with grief.

THE SNOW'S DREAMER

Asleep within her marble room she lies,
And dreams of days to come when she shall go
Across the meadows in the morning glow,
Song on her lips, and gladness in her eyes:
In dreams she sees again the warm, blue skies,
And breathes the fragrance which the soft gales blow
From trees whose blossoms, like belated snow,
Have filled the orchards with a sweet surprise.

So shall she dream, and slumber on until
The first faint whispers of the south wind bring
The shy anemones, all white with fear,
To look upon her in her chamber still;
Then, waking, hear the bluebird blithely sing
To welcome in the Daybreak of the Year!

THE CATHEDRAL BELLS

(Old Spanish Cathedral, St. Augustine, Florida)

High in the old cathedral tower they hung, —
Four ancient bells, the bronze arpeggio
That called to prayer the gray monks long ago,
And marked the hour while mass was said and sung.
Over a land of fragrant flowers they flung
Petals of music that were wont to blow
Out of the rose of Time, whereof we know
Naught save how sweet it is and ever young.

Listen! across the midnight comes their call, —
Twelve in succession sound the bell-notes clear:
A day has gone; another day, begun.
Awake, I hear them saying as they fall:
Vale, Hispania! Day of shadows drear!
Ave, America! Day of joy and sun!

QUATRAINS

DAWN

Out of the scabbard of the night,
By God's hand drawn,
Flashes his shining sword of light,
And lo, — the dawn!

STORM

In the black jungle of the sky now wakes
The Lightning's writhing brood of fiery snakes,
And lion Thunder from his lair of cloud
Startles the dusky world with challenge loud.

DUSK

Up from the underworld the shadows crowd
And ply with noiseless fingers at the loom
Whereon they weave the star-embroidered cloud
That screens the door of Day's new-builded tomb.

STARLIGHT

OVER the rim, a fiery ball,
God's hand the golden sun lets fall ;
Then from the blue deeps of the skies
The myriad white bubbles rise.

A SEA FANCY

THE bugling winds their solemn dirges blow
Across a dreary waste of foam-white waves.
Here is the ocean cemetery. Lo,
The phantom head-stones of the myriad graves !

MASTERY

STROLLING along the granite coast I caught
From lips invisible this message clear : —
Without my strength the ocean's rage were naught,
And I am but the whisper in thine ear !

DERELICT

Far in the distance looms a ship's dark hull,
Aimlessly tossing on an angry sea;
And, circling round, one solitary gull, —
White ponderer of this black mystery!

FOG

In agony of death throughout the night
The frenzied monarch tossed upon his bed
Whence rose at dawn, mysterious and white,
A ghost, — the spectre of the mighty dead.

THE PENALTY

Implacable and stern, the captive, Hate,
In silence sits, too anger-blind to see
Love's shining figure at his prison gate,
Longing to hear him bid her turn the key.

LIFE

Launched in the darkness on an unknown sea,
A plaything of the winds and waves, I drift,
And ponder what the shores of Life may be —
What harbor welcome when the shadows lift.

THE GOAL

Creeds for the credulous ; but as for me,
I choose to keep a mind alert and free.
Not Faith but Truth I set me for a goal :
Toward that shining mark God speed thee, Soul!

KNOWLEDGE

For all Philosophy may teach,
Only so far can Knowledge reach :
All that we know from breath to breath
Is Life and its great question — Death.

IN A GARDEN

THROUGHOUT the long, enchanted summer hours,
In treasuries of honey-wealth untold,
Here in their bright metropolis of flowers
The banker bees are busy with their gold.

IVY

UPON the walls the graceful Ivy climbs
And wraps with green the ancient ruin gray:
Romance it is, and these her leafy rhymes
Writ on the granite page of yesterday.

GRASS

HERE is the cloth whereon the dew and sun
Fashion their bright embroideries of bloom;
For dreams a pillow, and, when dreams are done,
A fragrant cover for the dreamless tomb.

ROSE

Screening her face of loveliness behind
The garden's leafy curtain, waits the Rose
For the enamored Nightingale to find
A lyric hidden in his book of prose.

DAY DREAM

Into the slumber of the Day there came
The vision of a spirit winged with flame,
And down the fragrant air one butterfly —
Her golden dream — sailed indolently by.

FIRE FANCIES

Deep in the ashes one live ember
Lingers two similes to show:
June in the arms of old December,
A red rose in a drift of snow.

CITY SPARROWS

Within the stone Sahara of the Town
A green oasis lies the open Square:
Hark to the noisy caravans of brown,
Intrepid Sparrows, — Arabs of the air!

WRIT IN WATER

River or sea, the voice is still the same,
Each curving water-lip the word repeats,
Forever rumoring the poet's name,
And murmuring melodiously — *Keats.*

CONTRAST

Caught in a crevice of the marble tomb,
A fragile plant uplifts its hand of bloom,
And poised thereon a butterfly takes breath:
Fantastic fellowship of Life and Death!

THE QUATRAIN

HARK at the lips of this pink whorl of shell
And you shall hear the ocean's surge and roar:
So in the quatrain's measure, written well,
A thousand lines shall all be sung in four.

A WISH

THIS be my wish: let all my lines
Across the pages run like vines;
The words, their shining blossoms be;
The book, a field of melody.

The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

Boston Public Library
3 9999 10503 762 4